

Message Text

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SUBJECT: POSTPONEMENT OF PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS IN SOUTH INDIA

1. THE KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT'S DECEMBER 19 ORDINANCE POSTPONING VILLAGE PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS POINTS UP THE FACT THAT ELECTIONS TO PANCHAYATS STAND POSTPONED IN ALL THE FOUR STATES OF SOUTH INDIA. IN KERALA, ELECTIONS TO PANCHAYATS WERE LAST HELD 11 YEARS AGO AND ARE PERIODICALLY POSTPONED. IN KARNATAKA AND ANDHRA PRADESH, ELECTIONS TO THESE BODIES WERE DUE IN 1972 AND 1974, RESPECTIVELY. IN TAMIL NADU, PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN POSTPONED SINCE 1974. THE RESPECTIVE STATE GOVERNMENTS HAVE USED EXCUSES LIKE PREPARATION OF ELECTORAL ROLLS, DROUGHT CONDITIONS AND, LATELY THE EMERGENCY FOR SUCH POSTPONEMENTS. BUT LACK OF CONFIDENCE ON THE PART OF THE RULING PARTIES OF THESE STATES TO FACE THE ELECTORATE AND THEIR APPREHENSION THAT THE OUTCOME OF PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS WOULD SERVE AS A TREND-SETTER FOR THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTIONS ARE THE MORE BASIC MAJOR REASONS FOR THE RELUCTANCE OF THE STATES TO HOLD THE PANCHAYAT POLLS. PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS IN SOUTH INDIA THEREFORE ARE UNLIKELY TO BE HELD BEFORE

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THE GENERAL ELECTIONS.

2. KARNATAKA: THE STATE GOVERNMENT PROMULGATED AN ORDINANCE ON ON DECEMBER 19, 1975 POSTPONING ELECTIONS TO VILLAGE PANCHAYATS FOR A PERIOD OF ONE YEAR FROM JANUARY 1, 1976. THE EXTENDED TERM OF VILLAGE PANCHAYATS WHICH EXPIRED ON DECEMBER 31, 1974 WAS EXTENDED FOR A PERIOD OF ONE YEAR THROUGH AN ORDINANCE LAST YEAR. ELECTIONS TO OVER 8,000 VILLAGE PANCHAYATS IN THE STATE WERE DUE IN 1972. THE CONGRESS (R) GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE HAS BEEN POSTPONING THESE ELECTIONS GIVING ADMINISTRATIVE REASONS LIKE PREPARATION OF ELECTORAL ROLLS. THE REAL CAUSE, HOWEVER, IS THE LACK OF CONFIDENCE ON THE PART OF THE CONGRESS (R) VIS-A-VIS ITS MAIN RIVAL, THE CONGRESS (O), WHICH CONTINUES TO HAVE DOMINANCE IN THE MAJORITY OF THE VILLAGE PANCHAYATS. ALTHOUGH NO SPECIFIC REASON HAS BEEN OFFERED FOR THE LATEST POSTPONEMENT, THE EMERGENCY IS THE READY EXCUSE FOR NOT HOLDING THE PANCHAYAT POLLS NOT.

3. KERALA: PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS IN THE STATE WERE LAST HELD IN 1964. THE THREE SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS WHICH CAME TO POWER IN THE STATE SINCE THEN HAVE POSTPONED THE PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS FROM TIME TO TIME UNDER ONE PRETEXT OR ANOTHER. IN AUGUST & 1975, THE RULING COALITION GOVERNMENT POSTPONED THE ELECTIONS EXTENDING THE TERM OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AND PANCHAYATS IN THE STATE UP TO APRIL 1976. THESE ELECTIONS ARE LIKELY TO BE HELD ONLY AFTER THE STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE.

4. ANDHRA PRADESH: THE TENURE OF PANCHAYAT INSTITUTIONS IN THE STATE WILL BE OVER ON THE FOLLOWING DATES: PANCHAYATS - JUNE, 1976; PANCHAYAT SAMITHIS - JANUARY, 1976; ZILLA PARISHADS - FEBRUARY, 1976. THE LIVES OF THESE INSTITUTIONS WERE EXTENDED TWICE EARLIER.

5. TAMIL NADU: THE DMK GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU ON OCTOBER 19, 1975 FURTHER EXTENDED THE TERM OF MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND PANCHAYATS UP TO JULY 1, 1976. DROUGHT AND SCARCITY CONDITIONS WERE ADVANCED AS THE CAUSE FOR NOT HOLDING THE ELECTIONS TO THE LOCAL BODIES DUE IN 1974. THE RULING DMK PARTY, AWARE OF ITS DIMINISHING POPULARITY, IS UNLIKELY TO HOLD ELECTIONS TO LOCAL BODIES BEFORE THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTIONS.

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